'Blackmail'--Sheridan

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Health center roadblock seen

By JOHN BAILEY
TNT Staff Writer

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department may be told it must change the thrust of services if it wants financing for a new facility, the department's director, Dr. Harlan P. McNutt, told county commissioners Monday.

"Blackmail," snapped Commissioner George Sheridan.

McNutt told commissioners an application for Hill-Burton Act funds has been approved by the state, but he said a certificate of necessity is required before the application can proceed.

That certificate must be approved by both the Pierce County Health Council and the Puget Sound Health Planning Council and the local group probably will require the health department to alter present operations, McNutt said.

He said he expects the Pierce County group to require the department to offer more primary health care for minorities for one thing.

FOR ANOTHER, the department will be told it must have local offices in such areas as Gig Harbor, Puyallup and Lakewood, the director said.

"I would be glad to have satellite offices as soon as the department grows sufficiently to warrant such a move," Dr. McNutt said.

But he said each office would require no less than $60,000 a year for the staff alone. He said the department now operates well-child and VD clinics in various districts but offers most services from central offices.

Sheridan was miffed at the anticipated demands.

"What it boils down to is that the health council will not grant the certificate unless we acquiesce to their demands," Sheridan said. "That's just plain blackmail."

Sheridan opined that since county commissioners created the health council and authorized it to rule on such matters the commission might consider "uncreating" the group.

A NEW FACILITY for the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, to house offices now located in the County-City Building, is proposed on a site south of Puget Cound General Hospital at an estimated cost of $3.26 million.

McNutt said he anticipates some 20 per cent of the cost could come from Hill-Burton funds.

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